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Book Review Department

By MARY ADAMS STEARNS

WHAT is meant by "summer reading"? What "light fiction"—that seems so heavy to the express man—do people stow away in the bottoms of their trunks? Some years ago publishers were wont to bring out special hammock stories, bound in bright blue, lavender, red, or yellow, and ladies who were very particular what they read, chose their books to match their gowns. Let it be said, however, that these books were known chiefly by their covers. Besides these there was that greatest of abominations, the paper covered novel. Not a title of all this gay library remains in my memory except "Mr. Barnes of New York" and "Mr. Potter of Texas" both of whom flaunted about in bright yellow. Yet, perhaps of all their gaudy companions they were the least "yellow."

Summer reading, vacation fiction, hammock novels were not paying propositions in the long run. The tired brain of a business man is not psychologically different from his rested brain. If he is thinking strong, viril thoughts all win-

ter he cannot suddenly begin to feed on mental mush. A wide-awake woman, interested in timely problems, cannot put these things aside, even if she is lying in a hammock, and become absorbed in languishing heroines who faint at the sight of a spider or blush at mention of a man.

Granted that tired men and women do want to rest their minds by change of mental diet, yet that diet must be just as wholesome, true and worth while as law books, medical books or school books. A man who knows men will not be interested in a hero who is only sham; a woman who knows life must have stories which are true to life. In other words men and women read exactly the same books in summer that they would read in the winter if they had the time.

It is lack of cold-weather time, rather than lack of summer-season brains that determines what shall go into the vacation trunk. Possibly a volume of Bergson which has mocked one all winter from the top of the bookcase is first



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to go in. Possibly some volume about "Panama and the Canal," "Ecuador," "Russia, the Country of Extremes" or some farthest north or farthest south book finds a corner ahead of any fiction. Possibly Sir Oliver Lodge's "Continuity" might lie side by side with "David Copperfield" or "Adam Bede"—one always means to re-read old favorites when there is time.

It is safe to count on being able to borrow many of the newest books. Armed with "The Salamander" and "Once to Every Man" it is easy by tact and perseverance to find others who possess such books as "Idle Wives," "The Titan," "Full Swing," "The Fortunate Youth," "What Will People Say," or "The Devil's Garden," and will be willing to exchange.

The very practical question of expense prevents one buying all of these for himself. Everyone knows that railroad fares, hotel bills, and new clothes do not leave much of a margin for literary purchases, and novels at one dollar and a half soon mount into a goodly sum. This difficulty has been met in two ways. Many public libraries are issuing vacation cards which allow the borrower to take books out of the city, and for those who live where this li-

brary privilege does not exist there is the so-called "Popular Copyright."

There are certain firms who do nothing but publish "popular copyrights"; others who carry "popular fiction libraries" along side of their other volumes. Last year's "best sellers" may now be had for the moderate price of half a dollar. Three favorites (a few months old) may be bought for the price of one "latest," with the added security of its being "good." No publisher would be at the trouble and expense of reprinting an old book that had not been cordially received by the public. Among these "popular copyrights" are found such books as "Queen," "The Postmaster," "The Prodigal Judge," "The Woodcarver of Lympos," and even old masterpieces as "Anna Karenina."

The days of flimsy fiction are over. Laura Jean Libby and "The Fire Side Companion" have passed away with banded hair and leg-o'-mutton sleeves. "Dime novels" are replaced by Jack London and Kipling. Baron Munchausen must bow before scientific travellers. Mrs. Southworth's heroines cannot cope with the up-to-date heroines, each of whom has some problem to solve. The character of summer reading is the same as that of winter reading, with a difference of degree. One reads more books, perhaps more exciting books during the vaca-



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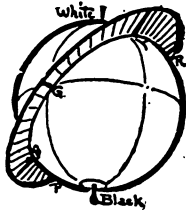
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tion season, but they must ring as true to the standards, characteristics and general life of today as if read under the study lamp in mid-winter.

ONCE TO EVERY MAN, by Larry Evans.
(The H. K. Fly Company).

SOMETIMES an unusual story calls attention to an unknown author; sometimes a man of extraordinary personality or peculiar life brings a book to public notice. "Once to Every Man" needs no backing from author nor publisher; Larry Evans needs no book to make him noteworthy. This combination of first novel and its author is as remarkable as it is interesting.

An invalid's chair in the Adirondack wilds in mid-winter, solitude, a fight for life and health—these are some of the things that make one interested in Larry Evans. Sheer, wholesome, story-telling characters so faithfully pictured that they seem to step out of the pages, a grip on American life and the ability to reproduce it—these are some of the things that make "Once to Every Man" a notable first novel.

The scene of the story is laid in a little New England hill village, yet a boxing match for the American championship brings in enough of New York to add plenty of metropolitan flavor. Denny Bolton is a giant lumberman, conscious of his strength yet controlling it and hiding it from his neighbors. He is not a favorite in the village because he fails to follow in the footsteps of his drunken father as everyone predicted. He is in love with a dainty slip of a girl but is too poor to marry her. At last his great chance comes; he takes it and makes good and the little Dryad is waiting for his triumphant return.

This book combines the best qualities of a popular novel with none of the bad ones. The quiet, powerful Denny and his love suggests certain of Gilbert Parker's stories; the hard, curt trainer and his assistants suggest both Kipling and O. Henry. There seems to be the rare combination of what is called "the big out-of-doors" with wholesome dime-novel excitement. "Once to Every Man" is a remarkable first novel and gives promise of having many notable successors.

NANCY THE JOYOUS, by Edith Stow. (Reilly and Britton).

"NANCY the Joyous" deserves a better name—one that does not suggest professional optimism or a ray of sunshine in a bad and naughty world. Nancy is what we would like to call "a trump." She is a real human girl with-